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FOR NEA/ELA AND INR/B

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PINR JO

SUBJECT: JORDANIAN GID'S DAHABI REPLACED WITH A SPECIALIST
ON INTERNAL ISSUES

REF: A. AMMAN 3365
 B. AMMAN 3164
 C. AMMAN 2781
 D. AMMAN 2424

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S) In a development surprising for its timing, given intense ongoing public and parliamentary anger at Israel's raids on Gaza, Lieutenant General Muhammad Al-Dahabi has been replaced as Director of the General Intelligence Department, ending just over three years in the post. A Royal Decree issued on December 29 appointed Major General Muhammad Rath'an Al-Raqqad as his replacement. Some Embassy contacts speculated that he was dismissed because of his handling of Gaza-related demonstrations. The step comes as other rumors swirl about an imminent cabinet shakeup (Ref A). The post of GID Director is among the most influential positions outside the King's family, affecting issues of internal order and reform, sensitive external relations, and counterterrorism. Civil society contacts saw the conservative Dahabi as one of the main obstacles to reform within the government.

¶2. (S) Dahabi has been in the limelight over the past several months after it was publicly revealed that Jordan - with the GID and Dahabi at the helm - reopened talks with the Hamas movement in several encounters in Jordan with Mohammad Nazzal, a member of the Hamas political office in Damascus (Refs B-D). This was the first publicly acknowledged high-level meeting between the GOJ and the Palestinian faction since 1999, when the authorities closed the Hamas office in Jordan and deported its leaders.

¶3. (C) Dahabi's successor appears to have risen through the ranks quickly of late, having been recently promoted to Major General and before that from Colonel to Brigadier following his successes in dismantling cells of the Al-Tawhid Brigades Organization that had targeted GID headquarters and other government offices in 2004. He had served as GID director in Irbid. He had distinguished himself in the handling of the elections held last year, when he served as GID pointman with the Ministry of Interior. Raqqad, who is of solid Bedouin stock, was born in Sahab, southeast of Amman, and is married with children. He holds a BA in History.

¶4. (S) Comment: Given Raqqad's past focus on internal issues while at GID and his impeccable Bedouin credentials, his selection may to a certain extent reflect a growing concern by the King about stability in Jordan. End Comment

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